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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000538

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: YOUTHS REGROUP, SAY MOVEMENT WILL GO FORWARD ON
EXTENDED TIMELINE

REF: A. CONAKRY 0520
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0525

Classified By: A/DCM SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

[1](#)1. (C)SUMMARY. Youth leaders say that they have overcome some initial dissension, and plan to move forward with a massive youth movement sometime in the next month. They are confident that they have significant support from the youths, although firm commitments from the labor unions and prominent civil society organizations have been elusive. The youths continue to advocate for non-violence, but they are also reportedly in contact with unpredictable personalities such as mutiny leader Claude Pivi. The youths' extended timeline will likely challenge the leaders to hold the movement together while giving the government more opportunity to undermine it. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) Although there has been some dissension among various youth leaders regarding a planned massive youth movement (reftels), youth leaders say the various groups have been able to come back together. A/DCM met with Dansa Kourouma on September 15, and then with Thierno Balde on September 16 to discuss recent developments.

GETTING THE MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT

[1](#)3. (C) Balde clarified that the youth groups had not yet provided the president with a list of all their demands, as previously reported. Instead, they had submitted a letter requesting a meeting, but Thierno said that the president is well aware of what they want to discuss with him. Thierno provided A/DCM with a copy of the declaration, which he said the youths hoped to hand deliver to the president in a private meeting no later than Thursday. Acknowledging that the president is currently in his village, Thierno said that is unlikely they will actually get a meeting.

[1](#)4. (C) Thierno said that if the meeting falls through, the youth leaders will deliver the declaration to the Minister Secretary General of the Presidency, Alpha Ibrahima Keira, according to protocol. "We know he (the president) will never get it if we give it to Keira, but we are going to follow all procedures," Thierno said. Delivery of the declaration is to coincide with a press conference, which is also expected to take place on Thursday.

TAKE THE MONEY

[1](#)5. (C) Referring to dissension among various youth groups over the weekend, Thierno said that most of the problems have been resolved. Both Dansa and Thierno emphasized that it does not matter if groups are accepting bribes from various

political actors. "Let them take the money, but that does not mean they will abandon the cause." According to Dansa, certain youth leaders were losing their nerve in the face of repeated threats on the part of the government. Thierno said that youth leaders were backing down from calling for the president's resignation, and instead trying to settle on calling only for the prime minister's dismissal. "We have been through this before; how many prime ministers do we have to have before we recognize the problem?," he said. Both Dansa and Thierno were confident that the movement would go forward.

¶6. (C) Both youth leaders confirmed that various political personalities continue to try to influence the various youth associations. Dansa said that Prime Minister Souare had distributed at least 43 million GnF (about \$10,000) to various groups, 90% of which were composed primarily of Peuhls. Thierno added that other political figures, including the president of the National Independent Electoral Commission, Ben Sekou Syllah, had been promising government positions. When asked how Syllah could promise jobs since he does not have a government position himself, Thierno said that Syllah is working with Naby Diakite, the Minister of Decentralization.

THREATENING PHONE CALLS

¶7. (C) With respect to the threats made to various youths, Dansa said that Minister Diakite, who was one of the youths' top choices for a ministerial position, had been calling

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individuals and warning them that they will end up in prison if they continue with their plans. Dansa said that Diakite had called him personally and told him that he "would spend his entire life in prison." Thierno said that he had received several anonymous phone calls just today threatening to close down his NGO, seize his bank account, and confiscate his car. He planned to go to the bank to withdraw his money. According to both contacts, youths have been receiving regular calls threatening imprisonment and/or death.

TAKING THEIR TIME

¶8. (C) The youth leaders appear to have backed down from their initial plan of quick action. Thierno said that they will give the government ten days to respond after they deliver their declaration on Thursday. He added that the youths do not want to start a major movement during the holy period of Ramadan, nor do they want to take action when the government will be most prepared to retaliate, so they will likely wait more than ten days.

¶9. (C) Thierno said that the youths are steadily gathering support, but some key groups have refused to back them, notably the labor unions. "When we talk to them, they say they are 200% behind us, but then when we ask them to sign our declaration, we do not hear anything," Thierno said. He noted that some NGOs may be withdrawing support as well. A prominent local human rights organization, RADDHO, was reportedly eager to sign on to the movement. However, Thierno said that the Director has now backed out because he "has a project pending with the PM that he does not want to jeopardize."

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

¶10. (C) Insisting on the peaceful nature of the planned movement, Thierno has been actively meeting with members of the military and the police. He said that some officers have

told him that they "unofficially" support the movement, but that they cannot do more than that at this time for fear of looking like they are organizing a coup d'etat. Thierno has been telling police and military alike that the youths will keep them apprised of their activities once they get started, and request non-interference.

¶11. (C) When A/DCM asked about some of the more uncontrollable elements of the military, such as Claude Pivi, who was the figurehead for the May military unity, Thierno lowered his voice and said "one of our group is in direct contact with Pivi." A/DCM asked if that meant that Pivi is supporting the movement. Thierno said that Pivi may not support it directly, but that he may be willing to intervene if the Presidential Guards turn on the population.

¶12. (C) He explained that the Presidential Guards are on one side while the rest of the military is on the other side, the side that does not want to kill civilians. As an example, Thierno mentioned when Pivi and his mutineers faced off against a contingent of Presidential Guards at the Castro Bridge in May. "The Presidential Guards left," Thierno said.

As A/DCM pressed for clarification of Pivi's possible role in a youth movement, Thierno said that they are hoping Pivi will intervene on their side if things get violent, facing down the presidential guards as he did before.

COMMENT

¶13. (C) Both Thierno and Dansa were optimistic about the strength of their movement, and their ability to hold it together in the weeks ahead. Although they continue to say that they want to avoid violence, Thierno's expectations of how Claude Pivi may help their cause suggests that they are enlisting dangerous, untrustworthy partners that could quickly turn a peaceful youth movement into a bloody event, despite the leaders' continued commitment to "maintain control over the youths." They will be challenged to hold their groups together in an organized fashion in the weeks ahead, especially since the delay in getting things started gives the government more time to undermine the movement. At the same time, the youths may have extended their timeline in order to give them more time to marshal as much support as possible. END COMMENT.
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